

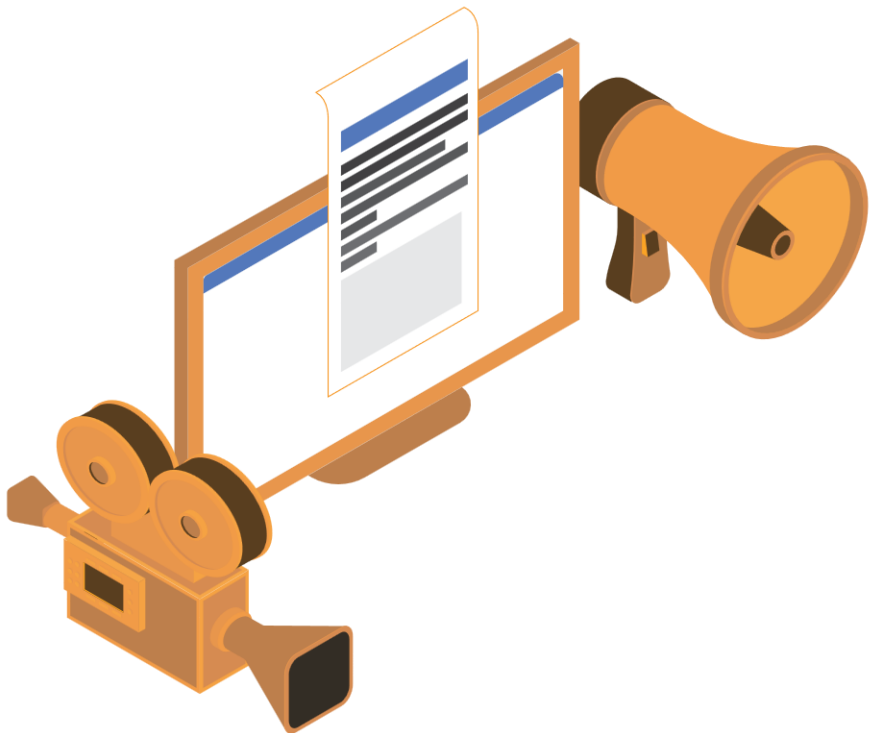


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Demokratija za razvoj

NEWS PORTALS AND SOCIAL MEDIA UNDER SCRUTINY

How much are information disorders
affecting the lives of citizens?



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affecting the lives of citizens?

Pristina, March 2022

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Paper prepared by:

Democracy for Development Institute

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1 | Introduction

According to the latest Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) 2021 report on the use of Information and Communication Technology, 96.1% of households in Kosovo have access to internet at home or apartment, while the frequency of internet use several times a day reaches 80%¹. This in fact translates into distribution of information in record time to the majority of the population, specifically to persons 16-74 years of age. It is essential that the dissemination of information is done fairly and without erroneous or partial information. In addition, the use of offensive, harsh and sexist language should be avoided. In fact, disinformation and dissemination of news with distorted content is done largely by various news portals operating in Kosovo, but also by individuals in various fields, be that journalists or representatives of political entities who have a great influence among certain groups.

Seeing the large number of news articles with such characteristics and with a goal of identifying them, D4D Institute monitored the official election campaign for the local elections which were held on October 17, 2021, as well as the election campaign period for runoff elections, that took place from 8 to 12 November. This included monitoring of categories such as political divisions and harsh language, misogyny and sexist language as well as external influence.

In addition to the election campaign, this research also included the last quarter of 2021 (October, November, December) where articles related to Special Court, Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue and Covid-19 were analyzed. The objective of this report is to identify news items aimed at misinforming citizens and inciting hatred against different individuals or groups, as well as to familiarize the public with the terms of misinformation and news checking. This report also includes recommendations addressed to online media, political entities, journalists and citizens.

¹ <https://ask.rks-qov.net/media/6422/tik-ne-ek-familjare-2021.pdf>

2 | Methodology

Table 1. Number of online news portals and social networks monitored in Albanian and Serbian languages. Source: D4D

		Facebook		Online Portals	Twitter accounts
		Pages	Groups		
Sample	ALB	203	10	76	32
	SRB	16	1	55	18
Total		411			

The report aims to analyze articles across online news portals and social media (Facebook and Twitter). It is divided into two samples: one focused on the Albanian language and the other on the Serbian language news. In addition, a section of this report reflects on the examples from the local elections, held in the Republic of Kosovo, considering that these narratives had a high readership and took place in the period coinciding with D4D report monitoring period, during the last quarter of the year. Therefore, since the vast majority of narratives (articles on online news portals and posts on social networks) were published during the local election period, that lasted between September 15, 2021, and November 15, 2021, they were merged with the narratives related to the period between October 1 to December 31, 2021. Therefore, this report is based on the narratives that have been circulating from September 15 to December 31, 2021. Although other categories such as the Special Court, Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue and Covid-19 are not covered by the election report, these categories are included in this one. Moreover, the sample has been complemented by other articles published during this period, within the categories of political divisions, harsh language and external influence. Hence, this report analyzes a total of six main categories including: Political Divisions and Hate Speech, External Influence, Covid-19, Special Court, Dialogue, and Misogyny. This report

monitored a total of 411 sources of information: of them, 230 Facebook pages and groups, 50 Twitter accounts, and 131 online news portals. Divided by language, in the Albanian language sample, a total of 321 sources of information were monitored, while a total of 90 sources were monitored in the Serbian language sample.

Articles were collected by using two online media monitoring platforms, Crowtangel: a platform that collects articles posted on the social network Facebook, enabling the collection of data on Facebook interactions (likes, comments, shares and other reactions) and Mediatoolkit, which collects articles from news portals, through which the measurement of potential readership was done. One platform made possible to collect data from online news portals and Twitter, while the other enabled the collection of data from Facebook (from groups and pages).

6,038 articles and posts were analyzed for the election report, of which 237 resulted in information disorders. On the other hand, 1,200 articles and posts were analyzed related to the post-election period, of which 39 resulted in information disorders.

In each of these categories, articles and posts with potentially higher readership were initially filtered, as a way to measure the impact of these articles on readers, and subsequently, the content of the articles was analyzed by classifying them into categories with false, distorted, partially true content, those serving as click baits and with harsh and hate speech. Each monitored category contains a full list of media and a list of keywords which served to collect articles and posts and facilitated the focus of the study, across different areas of interest and relevant topics.

Information collected during the monitoring process were stored for the sake of data veracity, as well as due to the fact that sometimes some articles or posts end up being removed, after being posted by certain news portals or groups. On this occasion, we created a database, where the following materials were stored:

- Screenshots;
- Numerical data, such as the number of potential readers, distribution and other interactions such as likes, comments and shares;
- Titles of articles with photos, posting date and the name of the news publisher; and
- Comments related to the category of misogyny posts on Facebook.

3 | Key Findings

As illustrated in Charts 5 and 6 below, published news culminated during election and runoff election periods. However, after the election period, with the fall in the intensity of production of articles and posts, a smaller sample was analyzed than that of the election and runoff period, with 1,200 articles and posts, of which 39 articles and posts were found to contain information disorders. This includes articles and posts in both samples, Albanian and Serbian. These articles and posts have had exaggerated, out-of-context content, biased language, news promoting disinformation, false, manipulated content, hate speech, harsh and sexist language.

The main data are based on the last three months of 2021 (October, November and December) of the samples in Albanian and Serbian languages as well as [the findings of the Report on Monitoring Local Elections in the Republic of Kosovo](#). What was noticed after analyzing the articles related to the Special Court, Kosovo-Serbia dialogue and the news related to Covid-19, was that they predominantly had an exaggerated content.

Based on the report findings, the total number of articles and posts with information disorders in both samples was 237, which generated 252,143 interactions on social networks, and reached approximately seven million potential readers. Meanwhile, during the last quarter (October, November, December 2021), there were 39 articles and posts in the Albanian language sample containing information disorders, which generated 98,658 interactions on social networks and reached almost 2.5 million potential readers. Hence, there were a total of 276 articles and posts with information disorders, which generated 350,801 interactions and reached over nine million potential readers.

Table 2. Number of potential readers, number of articles and posts with information disorders and number of interactions on online news portals and social networks in the Albanian and Serbian samples, including the data from the election and post-election periods. Source: D4D calculations

	Election period			Post-Election period			Total
	ALB	SRB	Total	ALB	SRB	Total	
Analyzed articles and posts	4.237	1.801	6.038	600	600	1200	7.238
Interactions on social networks	219.397	32.746	252.143	88.449	10.209	98.658	350.801
Articles and posts containing information disorders	180	57	237	33	6	39	276
People who have potentially read articles with information disorders	4,954,302	1,672,684	6,626,986	2,331,979	140.251	2,472,230	9,099,216

Political Divisions and Harsh Language

The highest number of articles and posts in this report relates to two dates: local elections and the runoff race. These two periods have had the highest share of articles and posts, with harsh and biased language, evoking clashes among political actors. As it was the case in the election period, in the post-election period, the news and posts related to this category made the greatest impact (see Charts 1 and 2 as well as [2021 Election Monitoring Report](#)).

External Influence

In the context of external influence, there were numerous narratives, mainly on online news portals in Serbian language. The highlight of all the news during this period was the denigration of the West, mainly of the USA and their foreign policy, as well as the distorted reflection of Kosovo Police actions in the north of the country. Meanwhile, in the Albanian sample had a lot of fake news about the alleged "payments" that the US Special Envoy Richard Grenell had been receiving for the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, from the government of the latter, for lobbying.

Special Court

News and posts regarding the defendants' expenses for hiring defense counsels, were published without offering any facts, while also unfounded allegations could be observed in relation to the lack of assistance and institutional care towards the defendants. Meanwhile, in the Serbian language sample, those few articles, were for the most part focused on presenting the facts falsely as well as using offensive words and hate speech against the defendants of the Special Court.

Dialogue

Unlike the sample in Serbian, in the Albanian sample, a harsh language and exaggerated headlines were observed far more than fake news. In the Serbian language sample, news items published were taken from news

portals in Serbia and especially Sputnik, which took the statements of Kosovo politicians out of context, distorting them completely. Unfounded news were also published, showing a list of countries that would withdraw the recognition of Kosovo already, or articles revealing the visits of the Prime Minister of Serbia, calling for army readiness.

Misogyny and Sexist Language

Albanian language sample, uncovers much more misogyny, using sexist and hate speech against women. While analyzing articles, misogyny and sexist language were mostly noticed during the election campaign and the runoff elections, and they were directed against women, running for mayors. In terms of the Serbian language sample, no articles using such language were found, in the course of the analysis.

Covid-19

In the last quarter of 2021, the analysis of articles related to Covid-19 uncovered information disorders only in the Albanian language sample, including fake news. The articles that had false content are the ones that reported on the measures taken by the Government of Kosovo, with many news portals not reporting accurately.

Chart 1. Number of potential readers by category, in the post-election period, in both samples.
Source: D4D calculations

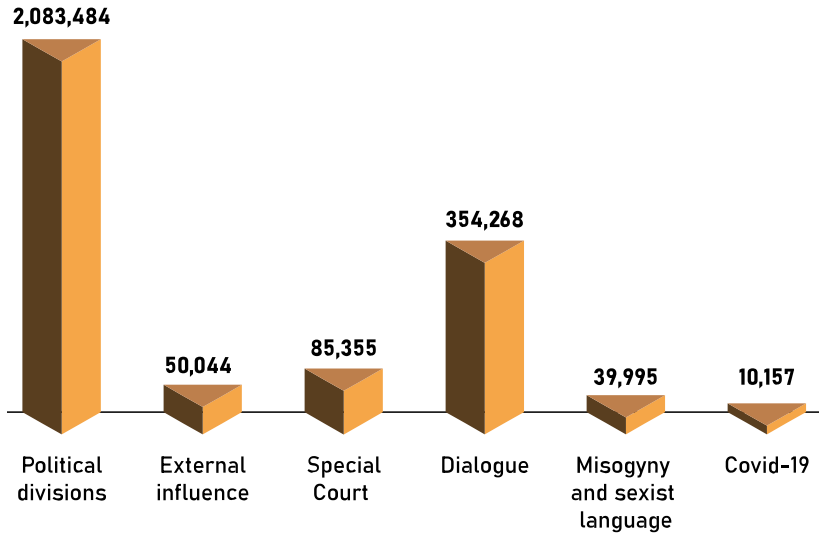


Chart 2. Number of interactions at the social media by category, in the post-election period, in both samples. Source: D4D calculations

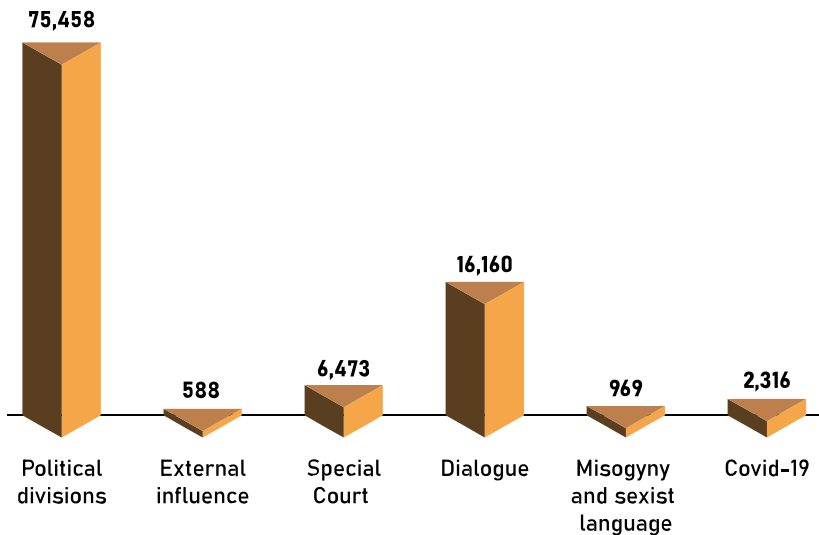


Chart 3. Share of articles with information disorders during the election period in the Albanian language sample. Source: *Election Monitoring Report, 2021, D4D*.

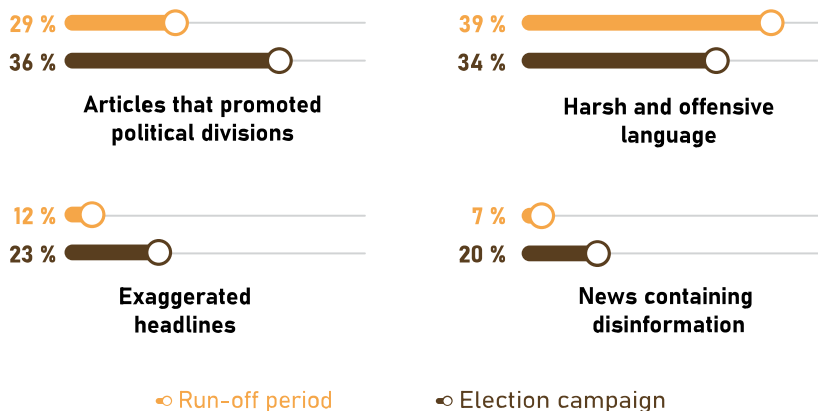
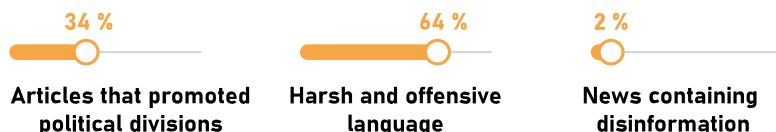


Chart 4. Share of articles with information disorders during the election period in the Serbian language sample. Source: *Election Monitoring Report, 2021, D4D*.



3.1. Political Divisions and Harsh Language

As seen in the charts below, a more intense harsh language promoting political divisions was noticeable throughout the election campaign, with these articles and posts culminating especially on election day, and on the day of runoff elections. This is more apparent in the Albanian language sample, but it may also be seen in Serbian, with a trend very similar to that of the sample in Albanian.

Chart 5. Number of articles published by online portals, between September 15 - December 31, 2021 in the Albanian language sample. Source: *Mediatoolkit*

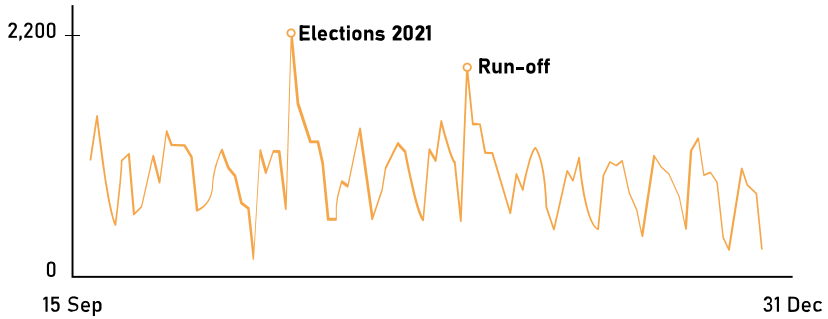
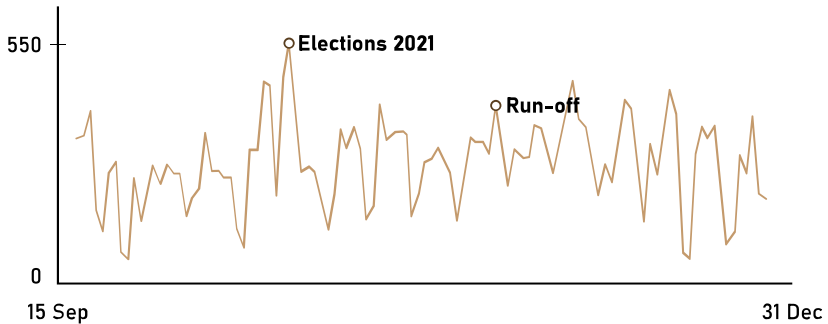


Chart 6. Number of articles published by online portals, between September 15 - December 31, 2021 in the Serbian language sample. Source: *Mediatoolkit*



Meanwhile, a series of events during the post-election period prompted a high number of publications on online news portals and posts on social networks. The two events with the highest coverage by news portals, and social networks were selected for this report. The first includes the confrontation between MP Musliu and Minister Peci, and the second being the clash between MP Deliu Kodra and Minister of Justice, Albulena Haxhiu. These two issues caused a substantial wave of publications across news portals, and high involvement of citizens through their reactions, across social networks. Numerically speaking, only these two narratives together, generated over 75,000 interactions on Facebook. These two examples serve as significant indicators to understand the level and depth of political divisions in Kosovo and their reflection on citizens.

In the Serbian language sample, during this period, there were predominantly more articles with exaggerated headlines, inciting language and news items causing panic among the citizens, with a view of a potential conflict between Kosovo and Serbia. What is most notable in the articles in the Serbian sample, is the inciting language and interethnic hatred, in most cases served to the public by publishing videos from Serb news portals and social networks. In addition, during this period, biased language was used in many articles in the Serbian language sample, as yet another means of supporting the Serbian List.

Many articles had exaggerated headlines aiming to serve as click baits for their readers and prompt their comments on the Facebook. In addition to articles of online news portals and representatives of political entities, comments from citizens were largely prominent and presented their attitudes against a particular candidate or political entity, more often than not, containing hate and offensive speech. In the Albanian language sample, news on online news portals with information disorders and exaggerated headlines promoting political divisions, were also prominent during the election campaign monitoring. In terms of harsh and offensive language, 34% of the articles monitored during the election campaign, had such content, either in their headlines or in terms of the content of the articles in general.

Table 3. Articles and posts according to the number of potential readers and interactions on social networks in both samples *Source: D4D calculations*

Period	Political divisions in the Albanian language	Potential readers	Interactions on social networks
Post-election	Physical assault against the Minister of Agriculture		15.497
Post-election	MP's insult directed against the Kumanovo group	2,083,484	59.961
Election	The news that Andin Hoti joined the Self-Determination Movement		1.957
Election	Taking out of context the photograph of the candidate for Prizren Mayor, Mytaher Haskuka		967
Election	Fake news related to the candidate for Municipality of Prishtina Mayor "Rama has issues with Rita Ora's family"		413
Election	Exaggerated news that PDK is under the directives of Belgrade	4.095	1.463
Total		2,087,579	80.258

	Political divisions in the Serbian language	Potential readers	Interactions on social networks
Election	Taking out of context of Kosovo Police actions in the north and the 1999 conflict	213.292	4.098
Election	Sarcastic news that the Serbian criminal group attempted to enter Kosovo but had no PCR tests	68.209	3.506
Election	Allegations by Serbian officials that Prime Minister Kurti is using the situation in the north for electoral gains	14.700	
Total		296.201	7.604

Examples from the Albanian language sample

A news headline "PDK's Blerta Deliu calls the former KLA fighter a terrorist" has been published on several online news portals and social networks thus generating overwhelming reactions. During a parliamentary session, MP Deliu, made a connection between the



Blerta Deliu e PDK-së e quan terrorist ish luftëtarin e UÇK-së?

Minister of Justice and her brother-in-law, calling him a terrorist, while the article in question offered no facts and arguments to support it. Around 112 pages, groups and online news portals reported on this session and despite the reactions, generated 59,961 interactions, 47,939 likes, 5,606 comments, 3,502 shares, and 2,914 other reactions, while videos shared on Facebook reached 2,083,484 views.

Series of articles published on online news portals and social networks, reported on the fierce debate between the Minister of Agriculture, Faton Peci and the PDK MP, Ganimete Musliu, where the latter used harsh and offensive language, towards the Minister Peci. Offensive language was spread on news portals and social networks, in some cases even being taken out of context. The debate escalated and ended with a physical assault, with MP Musliu throwing a glass of water in the direction of the Minister. This went viral across news portals and social media. On Facebook pages and groups, these narratives have had record reactions and shares on social networks. This article accounted for 15,497 interactions, of which 11,380 likes, 3,482 comments and 202 shares and 443 other reactions. This narrative has been published on more than 105 Facebook pages and groups.

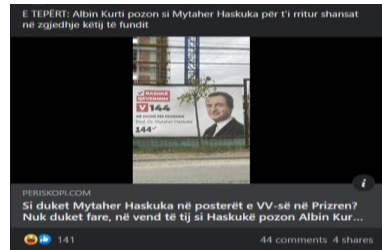


On the first day of the election campaign, news spread that Ukshin Hoti's son had left the PDK and joined the Self-Determination Movement. The news was initially shared with the public by a news portal, and it was reposted under a similar headline by nine other news portals/sites. In total, these ten articles accounted for 1,957 interactions, of which 1,252 likes, 560 comments, 26 shares, and 119 other interactions. However, Andin Hoti denied leaving the Democratic Party of Kosovo and joining the LVV, through a post on his official Facebook page, characterizing as unacceptable the news which caused confusion in the public, was based on the biased and orchestrated attacks that culminated in the "sensational" news of his alleged departure from the PDK. After checking this news, we noticed that a representative of the political entity PDK was initially asked about this issue, in an interview on one of the televisions operating in the country, from where this news had started to spread.

Mori post nga Kurti, Andin Hoti largohet nga PDK
 Detaje: <https://bit.ly/3Aow031>



A news headline: "VV seeks votes for Haskuka with Kurti's photo", is an article that made a big fuss during the election campaign. This news was in fact distorted, because the news portals posted only half of the billboard with the photograph of the leader of Self-Determination Movement, Albin Kurti, while removing the other part with the photograph of the candidate for mayor from this political entity, Mytaher Haskuka. This article was reproduced by three other Facebook pages, accounting for a total of 967 interactions, of which 236 likes, 224 comments, 14 shares and 493 other interactions.



During the election campaign, Përparim Rama, an LDK candidate for mayor during the election campaign, and now Mayor of Prishtina, was labeled by media profiles on Facebook which shared the news that Përparim Rama had been sued by the family of the famous Kosovar singer, Rita Ora for not finishing the design/renovation works at the Sahatçiu-Ora family home in London, as initially agreed. Përparim Rama denied everything, in an interview for the newspaper Reporteri, by saying that he had good relations with the Sahatçiu-Ora family. This news was also used as a click bait, by halving the headline "Përparim Rama is sued by Rita Ora's family?" and removing the part "Candidate for Mayor of Pristina gives a statement". Such articles were shared on 22 public Facebook pages as well as 11 open groups. In total, the distributed articles accounted for 413 interactions of which 198 likes, 120 comments, 21 shares and 74 other interactions.



On 13 October, when the situation in North was teetering, an article entitled "PDK and Brnabic with similar reactions to police action in north" was shared, in which the same group described "PDK as being under Belgrade's directives". conclusion encouraged political divisions and misinformed citizens, there was no evidence to claim that this political entity was under Belgrade's directives, but such accusations were made due to a difference in political beliefs. The shared article had 4,095 potential readers, while it accounted for 1,463 interactions of which 650 likes, 430 comments, 114 shares and 269 other interactions.



the

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Examples from the Serbian language sample

In addition to inciting language, the headline of this article obviously creates an exaggeration of the whole event. At the same time, the article links the events of the police action in the north of the country, to create the impression among the citizens, that such a conflict has the dimensions of the conflict from the 90s. This article reached 213,292 potential readers and had 4,098 interactions, of which 2,716 likes, 1,189 comments, and 193 shares in social media.

"DA LI ĆEMO SAHRANJIVATI BRAČU KAO 1999.?" Sestra ranjenog Srećka Sofronjevića obratila se Vučiću, predsednik u Raškoj sluša emotivne ispovedi Srba sa KiM: "Neizdrživo je!"



"A do ti varrosim vëllezërit si në 1999?" Motra e të plagosurit Srećko Sofronjović i është drejtuar Vucic, presidenti në Rashkë, i ndëgjon fjalimet emotive të serbëve në Kosovë: "Është e padurueshme!"

Another article exaggerated and taken out of context is the article with the headline "Leviathans headed to war in Kosovo, but returned from the border because they did not have PCR tests." The article also published a video of the neo-nationalist extremist of Leviathan, an organization that generally claims to deal with animal rights, but is known for its radical extremist views.

In the video inside the article, the extremist, Pavle Bihali, announces that all those who want to go into a war in Kosovo, must have their PCR tests. Through its message, this article, among others, also incites interethnic hatred, by informing all those willing on how to enter Kosovo in order to fight in the war. The article in question had 68,209 potential readers, it generated 3,506 interactions, of which 2990 likes, 423 comments, and 93 shares on social networks.

Levijatani pošli u rat za Kosovo, pa vraćeni s granice jer nisu imali PCR test

14/10/2021 18:08 · 14/10/2021 18:08 · 14 komentara · Nedžad Lulijani



"Levijatani janë nisur për luftë në Kosovë, por janë kthyer nga kufiri pasi nuk kanë pasur teste PCR"

Article entitled "He has nothing to appear with before the voters: Petkovic: Kurti is generating a crisis for a handful of votes", uses biased language, referring to statements of Petar Petkovic, Director of the Office for Kosovo, within the Serbian government. One-sided statements by politicians in Serbia have been prominent, and have, in most cases referred to actions in the north and called upon Serbs to vote only for the Serbian List. This article accuses Prime Minister Kurti of failing to campaign, and hence using the actions in the north for campaign purposes. At the same time, in the same articles, the embassies in Kosovo have been accused of supporting such an action, stating that they were supporting violence against the Serb community in Kosovo. The article in question had 14,700 potential readers.

"NEMA SA ČIM DA IZADE PRED GLASAČE" Petković: Kurti generiše krizu za šaku glasova

14/10/2021 18:08 · 14/10/2021 18:08 · 14 komentara · Nedžad Lulijani



"NUK KA ME ÇFARË TË DAL PARA VOTUESVE" Petkovic: Kurti po gjeneron krizë për një grusht votash

3.2. External Influence

When it comes to articles from abroad, online news portals in Kosovo usually use articles translated from foreign languages, articles that have to do with politics in Kosovo, and this has been observed while analyzing articles in both languages, Albanian and Serbian, during the local elections in Kosovo

and also in the last quarter of 2021. While examining these news in both samples, exaggerated, false, misleading, biased and hate speech articles were found.

In the Albanian language sample, external influence included primarily articles translated from the Serbian media. When it comes to the examples in the Albanian language, there was a significantly higher number of articles which related to the Government of Kosovo, and Richard Grenell, former US President, Donald Trump's Special Envoy for the Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue, the situation created in the North of the country with increased police forces, but not articles that could directly affect the opinion of citizens, regarding local elections. Also, in the Albanian language articles, news which served as click baits for people, with exaggerated and distorted headlines, were also marked. Such news included articles related to the United States of America.

In the Serbian language sample, articles published about external influence during the election campaign period were not directly related to local elections, with the exception of influential articles in Serbian, from Belgrade and Milorad Dodik, the former president of Republika Srpska of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which were more visible. Their statements were divided into two parts. Firstly, they made exaggerated statements about the situation in the north, and secondly, they called on Serbs in Kosovo to vote for the Serbian List. In this context, there was a tendency of Serbian-language online news portals to distort the facts on the ground and provide an exaggerated account of circumstances of the situation. The rest of the articles related to the harsh language and false narratives presented on Serbian language portals in relation to the West, and to the appointment of the commander of Kosovo Army.

Table 4. Articles and posts according to the number of potential readers and interactions on social networks in both samples *Source: D4D calculations*

Period	External influence in the Albanian language	Potential readers	Interactions on social networks
Post-election	The article that takes the American political analyst's position on Kurti out of context		99
Election	Exaggerated call by Serbian state official that Albin Kurti is leading the region to bloodshed		3.136
Election	Article that Russia is preparing to intervene on the border with Kosovo, with its army		17
Election	The news that Grenell is paid around 100 thousand dollars a month by Serbia		3.075
Total		0	6.327

	External influence in the Serbian language	Potential readers	Interactions on social networks
Election	Fake news that the West is pushing Kosovo towards radicalism	57.200	12
Election	Milorad Dodik's call to Kosovo Serbs to vote for the Serbian List	3.981	
Election	Sputnik Article linking actions in the north to the Kosovo government's intention to take control of natural resources	28.004	
Post-election	Fake news that the appointed Kosovo Army commander has ties with criminal clans	5.433	66
Post-election	Use of offensive term for Albanians by Serbian state officials		421
Post-election	News from Sputnik that US produces false data to influence Western countries in humanitarian interventions	44.661	2
Total		139.279	501

Examples from the Albanian language sample

A post titled: "US calls upon Albin Kurti directly: "Be careful never to accept this", is a news item with an exaggerated headline, serving as a click bait. Although the article is a message to Prime Minister, Albin Kurti, about the formation of the Association of Serbian Municipalities, it is not coming from an official United States institution, but from a professor at New York University, Alon Ben Meir, so this article is considered to be one with an exaggerated, misleading headline and an article that serves as a click bait. This post accounted for 99 interactions, of which 83 likes, 7 comments, 6 shares and three other interactions.



Article with the headline: "Djuric: "Kurti is leading the region towards a bloodshed", publishes a news that has circulated in various media, including the foreign ones, during the election campaign in Kosovo. Marko Djuric's statement, who is the Ambassador of Serbia to the US, is exaggerated and unfounded, as such actions have not led the country to bloodshed.

Djuric's statement on his Twitter account was published in the Macedonian media, and it accounted for a total of 3,136 interactions, of which 1,714 likes, 1,400 comments and 32 shares.

Following the situation created in the north of Kosovo, with Kosovo Police Special Units intervention, reports started, that Russia was preparing to send its army to the border between Kosovo and Serbia. This article was published by the media in Russia and was relayed by pages in Kosovo, with the same exaggerated headline and content. This post

Gjuriq: Kurti po e çon rajonin drejt gjakderdhjes

Publikuar më 20.02.2021



Rusia përgatitet të çojë ushtarë në Serbi, kjo mund të rris tensionet në

accounted for 17 interactions, of which 5 likes, 4 comments and 8 other interactions.

The news with the headline "Janjic: Grenell is paid 100 thousand dollars a month by Serbia for lobbying", published on November 8 is one of the articles that was shared by 10 other Facebook pages, during the runoff election campaign. The statement of the political analyst, Dusan Janjic, has been considered as fake news by Richard Grenell himself. The same news was denied by the Serbian analyst, Janjic, by saying that his statement was misinterpreted. In an interview, Janjic denied it. This article has been shared by 11 pages and 8 groups on Facebook, where it accounted for a total of 3,075 interactions, of which 1,365 likes, 854 comments, 444 shares and 411 other interactions.



Examples from the Serbian language sample

In the article "Mentors of Kosovo's independence are pushing towards radicalization - and that's not the end of it", the guest speaker on Sputnik.rs talks about the developments in northern Kosovo, and portrays this as a proof that those who have supported the project of Prishtina's unilateral independence, have decided to radicalize and accelerate this process, and this presents itself as the major threat. Through disinformation and biased narrative, Western countries are portrayed as the main influencers of the events that took place. This article reached 57,200 potential readers and was shared 12 times.

Mentori kosovske nezavisnosti guraju radikalizaciju — i ovo nije kraj

22:58 13.10.2021 (Dnevnik.rs: 09:43 14.10.2021)



Mentorët e pavarësisë së Kosovës, po shtyejnë drejt radikalizimit - dhe kjo nuk është e gjitha

In the article "I call on all Serbs in Kosovo to gather around the Serbian List", the member of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Presidency, Milorad Dodik, invited Kosovo Serbs to gather around the Serbian List, to which he wished every success in the local elections scheduled to take place on October 17th. The article was translated and published in media and news portals in Albanian. This article had 3,981 potential readers, but it was not re-shared.

Dodik: Pozivam sve Srbe da se okupe oko Srpske liste



Dodik: I ftoj të gjithë serbët, të mbiledhen rreth Listës Serbe

To prove that there was an attempt of external influence by various news portals and media as well as by various political officials in Serbia, including those with influence from Russia, one can look upon one of the news which was circulated by Sputniknews, which was described as disinformation, entitled "News: Is it possible that ROSU will start capturing Ujman/Gazivode, Trepça and other vital objects/video/". This article had 28,004 potential readers. Generally, this article talks about a totally different issue, completely unassociated with the headline it carries. After opening this article, one can see that it speaks about the elections in Russia and holding of Duma by Vladimir Putin's party.

Vesti: Da li je moguće da Rosu krene da zauzima Gazivode, Trepču i ostale vitalne objekte /video/



"Lajme: A është e mundur që Rosu të nis kapjen e Ujmanit, Trepçës dhe objekteve tiera vitale/video/"

A narrative produced by Sputnik Serbia was intended to denigrate US policy in international conflicts. This article, quotes Nikola Vrzic, author of the show "Sputnik's New Order" and claims that US distributes false information to its allies, on international conflicts, which then turn out to be untrue. This includes data on the Recak massacre. also about the conflict between Ukraine-Russia, where the US is trying

Od Račka do Iraka: Imaju li SAD nekog novog Kolina Pauela i za priče o „ruskoj invaziji“

22:31 08.12.2021 (Dobavljeno: 15:59 07.12.2021)



the

It is

to

influence more skeptical countries, such as Germany. This article had 44,661 potential readers and it was shared twice.

“Adem Jashari's nephew from the notebooks of the western services, put at the lead of the Kosovo Security Forces”, is the headline which refers to the appointment of Bashkim Jashari, as the head of the KSF. Firstly, this headline, is completely false. Whilst, the article inside shows a higher tendency to disinform readers, by referring to the KSF Commander's family, as drugs and arms trafficker, who is allegedly considered as such by the people from the West themselves. This post was published on Facebook by the news portal Politika, and Vaseljenska, and generated a total of 68 interactions, of which 44 likes, 22 comments and 2 shares.

Sinovac Adema Jašarija iz teftera zapadnih službi

Postoje indicije da je familija Jašari umešana u trgovinu drogom i oružjem. Što je s bezbednosnog aspekta pretnja za čitav Balkan, kaže stručnjak za bezbednost Gordana Mišev



Another article which refers to the appointment of Bashkim Jashari as the head of the KSF, includes the news titled "Who is the new Commander of the KSF: the relative of the KLA founders, "Ready for anything against Serbs".

Ko je novi komandant KBS: Bliski rođak osnivača OVK, „spreman da uradi sve protiv Srba“

13:01 30.11.2021 (Osveteno: 13.09.30.11.2021)



This article is misleading and biased from the very outset. It exhibits a tendency to create a false opinion about a certain figure, and at the same time instills fear among Serbs who already live in Kosovo. This article also includes an interview with Drecun, a member of the Serbian Parliament, who, among other things, says that Mr. Jashari was appointed to this position to start ethnic cleansing of Serbs and as such is a danger to Serbs. This article had 5,433 potential readers.

The use of hate speech by politicians in Serbia has long been a perpetual habit. One them who uses hate speech against Albanians is Aleksandar Vulin, Minister of Interior in the Serbian government. He very often uses the term "Shiptars" in his statements, the use of which has a derogatory and discriminatory connotation. However, this term has been challenged in courts in Serbia, although, the Court of Appeals has already allowed the use of this offensive term, by failing to sanction such a language. The use of these terms is generally derogatory, thus creating xenophobia among Serbs who do not use this word. At the same time, the chairman of the Albanian National Council stated that he would continue the battle up to the Constitutional Court, in order to prevent legalizing this term. This article accounted for 428 interactions including 320 likes, 87 comments, and 14 shares and was published by 7 Facebook pages.

EDHE GJYKATA E APELIT LEGALIZON
TERMIN FYES "SHIPTARI", KRYETARI I
KNSH-SË PARALAJMËRON PADI NË
GJYKATËN KUSHTETUESE NDAJ VULINIT



of

the

3.3. Special Court

The Special Court is one of the topics occupying quite some space on news portals and social networks, when it comes to publishing news related to the persons who have been arrested by the same court, and of which some were senior figures of state of Kosovo, such as Hashim Thaçi who held the position of President of Kosovo before his arrest, Kadri Veseli also one of the detainees, who was the President of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), MP from the Self-Determination Movement, Rexhep Selimi, Jakup Krasniqi, former Speaker of the Assembly of Kosovo, Nasim Haradinaj and Hysni Gucati, members of the Association of War Veterans, Salih Mustafa, Director of the Intelligence Department at the Ministry of Defense, and Pjetër Shala, former KLA soldier. All of them were leaders and senior members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

For all these detainees, news are constantly pouring in, in both Kosovar and Serbian media, but not all of these news display the truth. In the 100 news analyzed in the three-month period (October, November, December), around the Special Court, four news items had an exaggerated headline, news not corroborated by facts and news that were fake. Among other things, through these statements, news portals and social networks publish articles with exaggerated headlines and fake news that serve as click baits for readers, in order to increase readership.

On the other hand, Serbian language articles related to the Special Court, exhibited a more harsh language, derogatory terms used to refer to former KLA member, references such as: war criminal, terrorist and the like.

Table 5. Articles and posts according to the number of potential readers and interactions on social networks in both samples *Source: D4D calculations*

Period	Special Court in the Albanian language	Potential readers	Interactions on social networks
Post-election	News taken out of context on lawyers' fees of Special Court defendants	11.463	432
Post-election	Unfounded accusations by the Special Court defendants that the state has left them in oblivion and does not take care of them	64.112	2.146
Post-election	The post taken out of context showing the date of the release of former President Thaçi from The Hague		3.849
Total		75.575	6.427

	Special Court in the Serbian language	Potential readers	Interactions on social networks
Post-election	Denigrating and offensive article about the defendants of the Special Court by the Serb media	9.780	1
Total		9.780	1

Examples from the Albanian language sample

An article published by an online news portal shared the status of a Kosovo lawyer in relation to his exaggerated comments about the Special Court, and the costs of the defendants in this proceeding. More specifically, in the status posted on Facebook, the lawyer claims that the defendants are millionaires, and that the state should not pay for their defense counsels, as the court is treating them as individuals and not as KLA fighters. However, firstly the article does not offer facts about the wealth of the mentioned individuals and is built entirely on the post of the lawyer in question. Secondly, according to the [Law on the Specialist Chambers](#), more specifically, Article 21 states that in case individuals do not have sufficient means to pay to defend themselves before this court, the state must provide a counsel to them. This article reached 11,463 potential readers, and has generated a total of 432 interactions, of which it received 345 likes, 78 comments and 9 shares.

Të akuzuarit e Gjykatës Speciale marrin miliona euro, Gazmend Halilaj: Tmerr çfarë po ndodh! Të ndalën këto para, ata akuzohen si individ, e jo...

NOA - N.S.H. - ME 4 TETOR 2021 NE ORA: 10:21



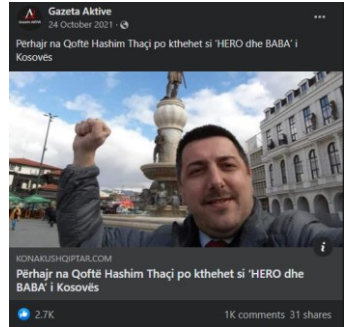
An article resulting from an interview conducted by a journalist from Albania, reveals the controversial comments of the former President of Kosovo, now defendant in the Special Court, Hashim Thaçi. On one hand, according to the comments of the journalist, Thaçi criticized the Kosovo government for lack of care, while on the other hand he refused to meet with the officials of the Ministry of Justice, claiming that they were doing so only for the sake of the election campaign.. This article reached 64,112 potential readers, and generated 2,146 interactions, of which 1,501 likes, 498 comments and 147 shares. Furthermore, this article was republished by 2 other online media.

Ish-presidenti Thaçi flet nga Haga: Në luftë mund të ishim vranë, gjithçka tjetër na bënë më të fortë

... 8 muajsh më parë



Article with a headline: "Congratulations to us all, Hashim Thaçi is returning as a "HERO and FATHER of Kosovo", is the statement of the journalist, Valon Sylja, who ironically states that the former President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi who was arrested by the Special Court, will return to Kosovo in April. This news is considered to be fake, as none of the relevant institutions published it, as Thaçi is currently in the midst of a court proceeding, while Specialist Chambers issued a statement on January 27 stating that Thaçi's detention was extended. This article reached 11,383 potential readers, it was shared 32 times, it generated 3,849 interactions, of which 2,696 likes, 1,017 comments and 104 other interactions.



Examples from the Serbian language sample

Judging from the headline of this article "All war criminals are staying in The Hague: The Special Court has not released any terrorists from Kosovo and Metohija on parole" we notice the use of harsh language and misinformation, at the same time. This article refers to the defendants from the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), as war criminals, despite the fact that they are in The Hague only in the capacity of defendants. This article also uses harsh language with terms such as "war criminal", "terrorist" and the like, the article in question is abundant with. References with offensive terms, especially towards someone who is still just a defendant, without any final decision, constitutes a distortion of the facts. This article has reached 9,780 potential readers, and was shared only once.



3.4. Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue

Kosovo-Serbia dialogue is one of the most discussed topics in Kosovo politics, since it began in March 2011. Besides being an item on the agenda of each government, this topic is present in different discussions and debate, both on television, news portals, as well as on social networks. In addition to local media, this topic is also featured in various international media and news portals. Thus, occupying such a large space and being a topic of great significance for both countries, the publication of articles on this issue is considerably high. After analyzing the articles published during October, November and December 2021, in Albanian and Serbian, articles with information disorders were found.

After analyzing the Albanian language sample, there were news that featured more hate speech and harsh language towards the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, when the issue of dialogue was discussed. "Coward", "faggot", "hypocrite", "lazy", "brat", are some of the words used by an analyst addressed to the Member of the Assembly of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj and the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti. While, when we talk about Serbian language articles, when it comes to the issue of Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, one can notice articles with exaggerated headlines and fake news. All these articles, both in Albanian and Serbian, have had a very high interaction and large distribution through various media, thus bringing articles with information disorders to the public.

Table 6. Articles and posts based on the number of potential readers and interactions on social networks in both samples *Source: D4D calculations*

Period	Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue in Serbian language	Potential readers	Interactions on social networks
Election	Statements by Serbian officials causing panic over Kosovo Police action in the North	82.580	2.051
Election	Prime Minister Kurti 's statements taken out of context by Sputnik Serbia	76.808	1.678
Post-election	Fake and exaggerated news about the statements of Prime Minister Kurti	80.377	560
Post-election	Exaggerated and fake headline related to the withdrawal of recognitions of Kosovo		4.735
Post-election	Serbian President, Aleksandar Vucic calls for "army readiness"		2.131
Post-election	President Vucic's Call to protect Serb people in Kosovo		2.293
Total		239.765	13.448

Examples from the Albanian language sample

In an article published by an online news portal, the status of a former KLA fighter, Naim Miftaraj, was shared, where he used hate speech against the Member of the Assembly of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, calling him a coward and using the word "faggot". The context of this statement and the language used in this article stem from a meeting that failed to happen, between Haradinaj and Kurti, to discuss the dialogue and the situation in the north.

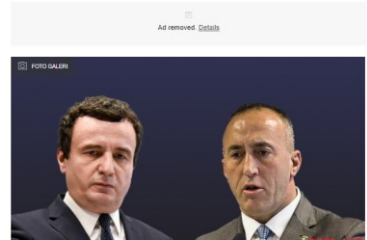
This statement of the former KLA fighter, comes after a meeting that was scheduled to take place between Haradinaj and the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti. This article reached 28,943 potential readers, and generated 701 interactions, of which 466 likes, 155 comments and 80 shares.

In an article published on one of the online portals entitled: "Berisha: You can find Albin Kurti in Chapter 63 of the Qur'an, Munafiq (Hypocrite)", harsh language was used against the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, calling him a "Hypocrite". The publicist, Kimete Berisha, in her post, describes Prime Minister Kurti as a fraud, liar, lazy, brat. Berisha's qualifications come after, according to her, Kurti has not kept his

promise given to the families of missing persons that he would negotiate with Serbia to shed light on whereabouts of missing persons. This article reached 80,825 potential readers, and received 1,741 likes, 575 comments and 163 shares. Furthermore, this article was relayed by other online media.

'Goditja fatale për Kosovën', 'Peder'/ Ramush Haradinaj në zyre e pret Radojçiqin, ndërsa friksohet nga Albin Kurti

NGA: NEHAT SHAGIRI MË: 19 TETOR 2021 NË ORA: 14:45



Berisha: Albin Kurtin e gjeni në kapitullin 63 të Kuranit. Munafik

Examples from the Serbian language sample

Prior to local elections in Kosovo, an action of the Special Unit had begun in the north of the country, to secure the border crossing points in Jarinje and Brnjak, and to start regulating the issue of license plates. During all this time, the situation has been dramatized by the Serbian media, in many instances with similar bombastic headlines, in order to attract readers to news portals and social networks. In general, the entire meeting with the President of Serbia was not described in detail, only statements which tended to create panic overall, which aimed to inform Serb citizens, however media covering this event published misleading articles with harsh language and exaggerated headlines. This article has potentially reached 82,580 people and has had 2,051 interactions including 1,360 likes, 588 comments as well as 103 shares.

"DA LI ĆEMO SAHRANJIVATI BRAĆU KAO 1999.?"
Sestra ranjenog Srećka Sofronijevića obratila se Vučiću, predsednik u Raškoj sluša emotivne isповesti Srba sa KiM: "Neizdrživo je!"



Exaggerated headline "Kurti fantasizes: "Serbia like Russia - it is creating Belarus from Srpska, Ukraine - from Montenegro", a comment on Kurti's statements, calling him a man who fantasizes, comes in an article whose content does not match its headline. Firstly, this headline does not coincide with the statements contained in the news text. The headline mentions how the Prime Minister of Kosovo called Serbia as Russia, Republika Srpska as Belarus, and Montenegro as Ukraine. By analyzing the text of the article, we notice that it makes no mention of any states, listed in the headline.. Apart from being an exaggerated headline, this is also a fake news, with reference to other statements related to the Western Balkans, however never in correlation with these countries. This article has potentially

Kurti fantazira: Srbija kao Rusija - od Srpske pravi Belorusiju, a od Crne Gore - Ukrajinu

4:14 22.11.2021 (Osvetlano: 15:49 22.11.2021)



reached 80,377 people and has had 560 interactions including 331 likes, 188 comments as well as 41 shares.

Another article "Kurti told when he would recognize Serbia", which, like the article above, was written by Sputnik in Serbian, refers to false and exaggerated statements, under a headline that Kurti told when he would recognize Serbia. The article in question makes no mention of a specific date when the recognition of Serbia by Kosovo will take place. By being a fake news, it refers to some of Kurti's statements, which mention the Constitution of Serbia, adopted in 2006, when some Constitutional changes were made in relation to Kosovo. The purpose of Prime Minister Kurti's statement was to show what changes need to be made, and what agreements need to be reached, to bring about recognitions. This article has potentially reached 76,808 persons and has accounted for 1,678 interactions including 1,183 likes, 484 comments as well as 11 shares.

This article was written to show how many countries are ready to withdraw the recognition of Kosovo, but the article's content by no means coincides with what the headline implies. The article in general clarifies the 1-year moratorium signed in Washington D.C. Otherwise, if we make a comparison between the headline and the article's content, we immediately notice that the purpose of this article is to disinform the readers based on the headline, while getting as many clicks as possible, from those who click on the same link. This post generated 4,735 interactions, of which 3320 likes, 878 comments and 69 shares.

Kurti poručio kada će takozvano Kosovo da prizna Srbiju

16.22 16.11.2021



"Više od deset država spremno da povuče priznanje Kosova"

Beograd -- Mnogo više od deset država je spremno da preispita svoje odluke o Kosovu i Metohiji, rekao je ministar spoljnih poslova Srbije Nikola Seljaković.

2008 860 | UPIŠKAL 26.11.2021 | 21:04

Like Comment Share



The following news coming from the Serbian media talks about the visit of the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic, to a Serbian military base in Kraljevo. The news refers to this visit with the words "Be ready" which was not found in the text of the article. Moreover, this news item seems to be intended to get as many clicks from readers as possible and increase Serbian nationalism. This article generated 2,131 interactions, of which 1,099 likes, 546 comments and 97 shares.

VUCIC POSTROJAVJA VOJSKU U KRALJEVU Budite spremni! Srpski ratnici zapevali uglas: Odlazimo na Kosovo ravno...



This news is about Vucic's visit to Raska, and the meeting he and his associates had with the Serbian army in this part of Serbia. This news generally aims to instill fear among the citizens, notwithstanding whether they come from Kosovo or Serbia, and thus attempts to create an opinion about a certain issue. He also refers to Kosovo Serbs present, telling them to protect the people. Some terms used in this text, constitute hate speech, or harsh language. In general, this news was intended to reach as many people as possible on the news portals and social networks. This news generated 2,293 interactions, 351 likes, 968 comments and 31 shares

Vučić sa Srbima u Raški: Čuvaćemo mir, ako krene nasilje zaštitite narod



3.5. Misogyny and Sexist Language

Misogyny poses a particular challenge in the media environment, where posts, articles and comments with such content are prevalent. This phenomenon was particularly evident during the election campaign period (see report: [Election campaign under scrutiny: Do information disorders threaten election integrity?](#), page 34). Women are qualified differently by MPs, ministers, state officials as well as by citizens, judging from the various

comments on social networks. However, during this research, misogynist language was mostly observed at the times of the election campaign. Hate speech and sexist language against women in politics during this period, has been overwhelmingly present in articles and posts with exaggerated headlines, that were supposed to incite readers' curiosity and to spark comments on Facebook posts. Sexist language and such comments have been more pronounced against women candidates for municipal assemblies and those for mayors. If we turn the spotlight to the election period, the woman who was targeted the most by misogynist language was Mimoza Kusari Lila, who was a candidate for Mayor of Gjakova on the LVV list. If we consider the last quarter of 2021, there were cases when women were offended and harsh language was used against them, when the articles related to the Special Court were analyzed and the prey of these comments was the PDK MP, Ms. Blerta Deliu-Kodra, causing the articles to reach a high number of people. As for the Serbian language sample, no such article were present in the sample selected for article analysis.

Table 7. Articles and posts based on the number of potential readers and interactions on social networks, in both samples *Source: D4D calculations*

Period	Misogyny and sexist language in the Albanian language	Potential readers	Interactions on social networks
Post-election	Offensive language used by a journalist against MP Blerta Deliu-Kodra	39.995	969
Election	Headline that has taken out of context the statement of Begjet Pacolli against Mimoza Kusari-Lila		453
Election	Edited photo with the aim of attacking the woman Mayoral candidate in the Municipality of Ferizaj, Sibel Halimi		1.862
Election	Edited photo and exaggerated news about Mimoza Kusari-Lila's visit to former Libyan President, Muammar Gaddafi		425
Election	Offense directed against Mimoza Kusari Lila, with derogatory words	2.100	101
Total		42.095	3.810

Examples from the Albanian language sample

In the article with the headline: "Criminal group" / Naim Miftari slurs Blerta Deliu again: "Your bosses are being tried in The Hague for the murder of Albanians", the Member of the Assembly of Kosovo was offended, by being called a "coot" along with a series of harsh and unfounded accusations. This article reached 39,995 potential readers, and received 719 likes, 158 comments and 92 shares.

On September 27, a news article was shared regarding the President of the political entity Alternativa, Mimoza Kusari-Lila, and a statement of the President of AKR, Behgjet Pacolli. The headline of this article was taken out of context and the statement was distorted. However, even Behgjet Pacolli's statement as a whole has promoted political divisions and used harsh language. This article accounted for 453 interactions, of which 165 likes, 196 comments and 36 shares and 56 other interactions.

The woman candidate for Mayor of Ferizaj from the ranks of the Democratic League of Kosovo, Sibel Halimi, has been the subject of ridicule regarding her promise to use the electric scooters in this municipality. This news was published by a portal, accompanied by a manipulated photo, taking out of context her promise to use electric scooters in the Municipality of Ferizaj. In addition to the news portal that made this photo manipulation, this article was posted 8 more times on Facebook where a large number of comments were noticed, that contained insults, misogynist and sexist

"Grup kriminal"/ Naim Miftari përsëri 'godet' Blerta Deliu: Shefat t'u po gjykoheh në Hagë për vrasjen e shqiptarëve

NDA N. SH. ME 22 NENTOR 2021 NE ORA: 09:08



"Mimoza Kusari-Lila ka qenë e përkëthetur në AKR, prej ardhjes së saj arrijë grup nuk ka ardhë në AKR..."



BEHGHJET PACOLLI

Behgjet Pacolli: Miliona euro ia kam dhënë arrogantes Mimoza Kusari-Lila - Epilogu

Mytëzina Selmani and 217 others

196 Comments 36 Shares



KORREKT PRESS

Halimi: Në Ferizaj do të fusim në përdorim edhe trotinetët elektrik

58

18 Comments 4 Sh

language, thus accounting for 1,862 interactions of which 552 likes, 676 comments, 8 shares and 623 other interactions.

The article entitled "When Mimoza Kusari and the delegation got tired of dancing, Gaddafi's aide ordered them to continue" was republished and it targeted Mimoza Kusari Lila. This article was published some time ago, while it was republished during the election campaign. The article contained a manipulated photo, offensive language towards the candidate for Municipality of Gjakova, Mimoza Kusari-Lila, and was taken out of context. The article generated 425 interactions on Facebook, of which 164 likes, 54 shares, 118 comments and 89 other interactions. In addition to the offensive and insulting language used by this news portal, there were hundreds of comments on this news on Facebook where misogynistic language was used against Mimoza Kusari-Lila, calling her "a doll".



In a Tweet that reflected on the TV debate with the candidates for Mayor of Gjakova, a series of misogynist comments were addressed against Kusari-Lila. She was labeled as a bird, who can not speak and can not read; moreover during these comments a cynical laugh was noticed with all the men present in this debate. This video was shared on Twitter and reached 2,100 potential viewers and 101 interactions of which 4 comments, 14 shares and 83 likes.

"krejt i kë ndim", "turrec", "pe fol pa ditë", "sje tu ditë me lexu", "ta spjegji un"

Gjuha e përdorur ndaj një gruaje në debat në televizionin publik të Kosovës

Edhe në e gërditshme është qeshja cinike e burrave tjerë në studio, përftshie edhe moderatorin e emisionit



3.6. Covid-19

Articles and news related to the Covid-19 pandemic are posted by every media and news portal in the country, causing these news items to contain information disorders. While analyzing articles related to Covid-19, in the last

quarter of 2021 (October, November and December) harsh language and fake news were observed only in Albanian language.

These articles were noticeable in the Albanian language, while reporting on the measures taken by the Government of Kosovo to curb the Covid-19 pandemic, that were not being reported on correctly, thereby offering the public fake news. In addition, harsher language was used on social networks such as Facebook. Harsh language was used against public and state officials. For instance, when it comes to Prindon Sadriu, the husband of the President of Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani. Harsh language was used against Sadriu, as he asked to be reimbursed by the state of Kosovo after being infected with Covid-19.

Table 8. Articles and posts based on the number of potential readers and interactions on social networks, in both samples *Source: D4D calculations*

Period	Covid-19 in the Albanian language	Potential readers	Interactions on social networks
Post-election	Fake news about the Kosovo government's measures against Covid-19	9.985	205
Post-election	Harsh criticism against former Minister Vitia, unfounded on solid facts and arguments		1.593
Post-election	Mocking article against the President's husband, as he requested reimbursement after being infected with Covid-19	13.172	518
Total		23.157	2.316

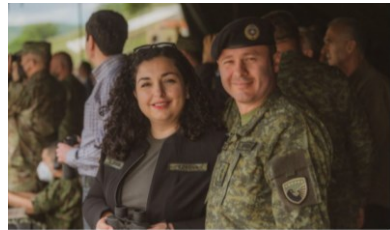
Examples from the Albanian language sample

Article published on one of the online news portals entitled: "The new measures as of January 3: Unvaccinated diaspora can come to Kosovo for the New Year's holidays", circulated during December as fake news, considering that as per the decision published by the Government of Kosovo on the entry and exit of citizens in and out of the Republic of Kosovo, all persons entering Kosovo were required to have proof of "Vaccination Certificate for full (two-dose) vaccination against Covid-19". This article reached 9,985 potential readers, and received 128 likes, 68 comments and 9 shares.



Masat e reja prej 3 janarit: Diaspora mund të vijë në Kosovë të pavaksinuar për festat e fundvitit

Article published on one of the online news portals titled: "A group opened to help Prindon collect 396 euros: A protest march is also proposed", is targeted and mocks Prindon Sadriu, the husband of Kosovo President, Vjosa Osmani, who had asked to be reimbursed by the state after being infected with the Covid-19. A mockery started across news portals and

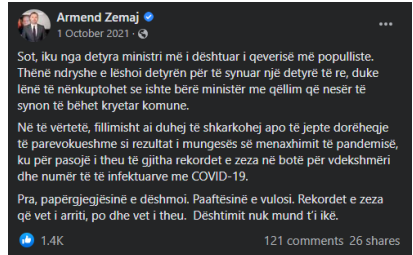


Hapet grup për ta ndihmuar Prindonin t'i bëjë 396 euro: Propozohet edhe marsh

social media, in relation to Sadriu's request, there was even a group that was set-up on the social network Facebook calling for a protest march, ironizing his request for reimbursement. This article reached 13,172 potential readers, and received 412 likes, 101 comments and 5 shares.

A post published by MP Armend Zemaj, on his Facebook page, used harsh language against Arben Vitia, former Minister of Health, after the latter had resigned from the post of Minister. Zemaj used harsh language against Vitia, calling him a loser and incompetent. The language used by the MP comes after, according to him, the rise in the number of cases of Covid-19

infections, resulted from Viti's poor management, during his time as Minister of Health. This post was shared 26 times, it accounted for 1,593 interactions, of which 1,420 likes, 121 comments and 26 other interactions.



4 | Conclusions

4.1. Conclusions related to the election period

Information disorders are a global trend occurring even in the most democratic countries. Such a trend, of course, has been inevitable in Kosovo as well. However, the continuous rise of this trend does not contribute to the accurate information of citizens and naturally undermines the citizens' trust, in the media and institutions of the country.

Information disorders have been an indivisible part of these elections as well, including both the election campaign and the run-off race. Online news portals, Facebook groups and Twitter accounts often post articles and news which may or may not intentionally affect the integrity of the electoral process, by attacking representatives of political entities or political entities as a whole. In addition verifying the content, when posting the news for the first time, the same must be done by other media, when they repost the news. Political parties should be careful when it comes to misogynist contents towards women and promote, to the degree possible, the importance of including women in the political arena. It is also important that every post and article sponsored in the media, discloses the exact sponsorship, as this would increase the transparency of political entities and it would contribute to increasing citizens' trust in the media. During this research, sponsored articles were noticed, particularly in the runoff elections, when the potential readership and interactions were much higher, despite the lower number of posted articles with information disorders.

When it comes to articles and posts in the category of external influence, it has been noticed that such news are more prevalent in the sample in Serbian than in the Albanian one. This goes on to show the continuous influence that the state of Serbia aims to exert over citizens of Serbian ethnicity living in Kosovo, thus attempting to influence especially the continuous empowerment of the Serbian List.

4.2. Conclusions related to the post-election period

While analyzing articles, in the post-election period, namely in the last quarter of 2021, information disorders were more noticeable in the news items related to the Special Court, Kosovo-Serbia dialogue and the Covid-19 pandemic. These articles carried news with hate speech, exaggerated headlines, fake news and harsh language. Analysis of these news, brought to light their specific feature, namely that all these articles have had a high readership and interactions, where a news item with hate speech managed to generate up to 47,939 likes and to be shared on around 112 other social network pages. Such high numbers promote harsh language, in which case they reach a high number of readers, and possibly even readers under the age of 18, impacting them negatively. Therefore, it is important that the media inform accurately and contribute to the integrity of the elections, but also to the political situation in the country in general. On the other hand, political parties and their representatives should also choose the language of communication and avoid using offensive terms.

5 | Recommendations

Public information should be done accurately, without the aim of getting personal gain at the detriment of the other party. Dissemination of untrue, distorted news or hate speech should not be an option, either for online news portals or certain individuals. Freedom of expression ends where the freedom of others is violated. Based on the conclusions from this report, recommendations have been addressed to representatives of news portals, political parties, journalists, analysts and citizens. Some of the recommendations are addressed to all groups listed below.

5.1. Recommendations to News Portals

- Verify all facts before publishing the news
- Do not promote political divisions and hate speech
- Report carefully and responsibly on misogyny;
- Implement the practice of gender sensitive reporting;
- When reporting on sexist language and hate speech, disclosed them as such
- Filter comments on social media, removing those that contain hate speech and sexist language
- Refrain from using exaggerated headlines aimed at generating clicks
- All articles sponsored in the print media should have a disclaimer that they are sponsored by the political entity or the candidate of the political entity

5.2. Recommendations to Political Entities

- Do not promote political divisions, which incite hatred among citizens

- Do not use sexist language against women
- Political parties and political leaders must refrain from harsh, hateful and misogynist language
- Political parties and political leaders should not be involved in disinformation campaigns
- Political parties must make campaign spending public on social media

5.3. Recommendations to Citizens

- Check and verify, the source of information, the author, the date of publication and the link of the news portal
- Verify the truthfulness of the news before sharing it on social media
- Read the articles in their entirety and do not distribute information based solely on the headlines of the articles
- Refrain from hate speech and sexist language in comments on social networks

6 | Annexes

6.1. Definitions of Terminology on Information Disorder Content

Term	Definition
Information disorders	Information disorders are intentional or unintentional dissemination and publication of untrue, manipulated, exaggerated information or information containing harsh, sexist and hate speech.
Potential readership	Potential readership means how many people have potentially read the article on online news portals.
Interactions	Interactions include all forms of online reader actions related to a Facebook or Twitter post. It includes likes, comments, article sharing or other reactions like happy, sad, nervous and surprised.
Disinformation	False information that is deliberately and often secretly disseminated (such as inciting gossip) in order to influence public opinion or obscure the truth.
Hate speech	Abusive or threatening speech or writing that expresses prejudice against a particular group
Misogyny	Hatred, disgust or prejudice against women

Online violence

Use of digital devices or services online to engage in activities that result in physical, psychological, or emotional self-harm or harm to another person.

Exaggerated headlines

Title created to make readers want to click on a hyperlink, especially when the link leads to content of dubious value.

List of abbreviations

KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
PCR	Polymerase Chain Reaction Test for Covid-19
KSF	Kosovo Security Forces
ROSU	Kosovo Police Special Operations Unit
USA	United States of America
AAK	Alliance for the Future of Kosovo
AKR	New Kosovo Alliance
LDK	Democratic League of Kosovo
PDK	Democratic Party of Kosovo
LVV	Self-Determination Movement
D4D	Democracy for Development Institute

Democracy for Development (D4D) Institute was established in April 2010 by a group of analysts were increasingly worried that the state-building exercise had neglected democracy.

D4D's vision is to promote an active and educated citizenry that participates fully in the public space and utilizes the public arena of representation and decision-making to deliberate and build consensus over resource allocation that is efficient, smart, long-term, and that brings about equitable development.

D4D influences specific policy, promotes a cross-sectorial approach to problem solving, and tackles the institutional routine of decision making by recommending incremental improvements and operates with maximum effectiveness in order to fully promote Kosovo's stabilization and democratic development.

For more information about D4D's activities, please visit our website: www.d4d-ks.org

